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SUBJECT: JORDAN GPA ACCESSION UPDATE

1. (u) Summary: Jordan has nearly completed its initial Entity Offer for accession into the WTO's plurilateral Government Procurement Agreement (GPA). While a few hurdles remain, including settling on the all-important offsets in the General Notes of the Offer, the GOJ is certain it will meet its initial commitment to WTO delegations in Geneva to have their Offer presented by the end of 2002. GPA Progress would be a fitting topic for discussion at the December 11 Joint Commission meeting in Washington. End Summary.

2. (u) Jordanian Trade Ministry officials confirmed November 7 that they are 80% finished with their initial Entity Offer to accede to the WTO's Government Procurement Agreement (GPA). They admit that the most daunting task - completing the General Notes and agreeing with affected private sector elements on offsets - still lies ahead. To this end, the GOJ will chair a final meeting of the GPA National Committee, a public-private sector group that has been hammering out positions that address private-sector entities' particular concerns about opening their sectors to competition. MoIT officials hope to get from this meeting a final list of offset requests. Once that has been accomplished, the draft Entity offer with the National Committee's endorsement will be sent to the cabinet for approval. MoIT officials said there would be "no problem" passing the Offer through the cabinet, and expressed confidence they would be able to submit a formal offer well in time to meet their original commitment to the WTO committee of a year-end submission.

3. (u) In a related effort to make national legislation compatible with GPA accession, Jordan's Government Tenders Directorate recently hired an independent legal expert to redraft the February 2002 draft Public Procurement Law into a regulation and instructions. The redraft, it is hoped, will bring Jordan's current procurement regime more in line with its expected obligations as a GPA member.

4. (u) Comment: Trade ministry officials tell us Jordan's efforts to date have won praise from a number of delegations in Geneva. As Jordan's self-imposed deadline for submission of its Entity Offer approaches, it might be useful to add GPA issues to the agenda for the Joint Commission meeting scheduled for December 11 in Washington. Should the offer be presented before then, the parties could discuss next steps and find out what sort of technical assistance Jordan can be expected to request for the negotiations process. End comment.
GNEHM